STATE OF UTAH GENERAL OUTLOOK
May 1, 2007

SUMMARY

April has put an exclamation point on March. As you remember, March was the snowpack equivalent of the Titanic. The only reason that April didn't melt more snow is that there wasn't much snow left to melt. As it is melt ranged from 73% in southwest Utah to 168% of normal for the Uintah Basin. We begin with record or near record low snowpacks in March, accelerate the melt in April and now we are left with snowpacks that range between 3% over southeast Utah to 33% of average on the Bear River. Southern Utah snowpacks are much lower than northern counterparts. With the melting of the snowpack comes the runoff season that can be described, at this point, as lethargic at best. In many cases, low elevation watersheds had little to no response. Many mid elevation watersheds saw moderate rises, have peaked for the season, and are now in recession. Those watersheds with higher elevations are now (early May) in the process of peak flows, nearly a month early and much below average. Optimistically, most watersheds will not be able to sustain significant flows beyond the end of May and most likely not past mid May. Those interests that depend on direct streamflow will be the first and possibly most impacted by what is shaping up to be a long summer. Soil moisture values have peaked and in some cases have started to decline: Bear - 77%, Weber - 75%, Provo - 66%, Uintah Basin - 70%, southeast Utah - 74%, Sevier - 68%, southwest Utah - 59%, and statewide - 70% of saturation. Those watersheds that did increase soil moisture in April did so only slightly and all basins are expected to dry out very quickly. In addition to the obvious impacts of reduced streamflow and dependent on future climatic conditions, Utah might expect an earlier and longer fire season, reduced forage production, agricultural and forest stress and any number of other drought related impacts. Reservoir storage continues to be in good condition although some reservoirs have already begun to decline. Early demand (April!) outpacing inflow with the portent of a long summer is, in general, a red flag. General water supply conditions range from much below to near average. Streamflow forecasts range from 1% in the Monticello area to 60% of average on Little Cottonwood Creek. Surface Water Supply Indices range from 12% on the Weber River to 67% on the west side of the Uintah Basin.

SNOWPACK

May first snowpacks as measured by the NRCS SNOTEL are as follows: Bear - 33%, Weber - 30%, Provo - 21%, Uintahs - 32%, southeast Utah - 3%, Sevier - 26%, southwest Utah - 15% and the statewide figure is 27% of average. Snowpacks are isothermal at all locations with rapid snowmelt and are not expected to last past mid May. This is about a month earlier than normal.

PRECIPITATION

Mountain precipitation during April was much below normal in northern Utah (48%-63%) and below normal across southern Utah (75%-85%). This brings the seasonal accumulation (Oct-Apr) to 80% of average statewide and ranges from 76% on the Provo to 86% over southeastern Utah.

RESERVOIRS

Storage in 41 of Utah's key irrigation reservoirs is at 75% of capacity up 1% from last month. This is also an increase of 2% from last year. Reservoirs across the State did not increase substantially from last month although most were close to full then and remain so now. There are some such as Willard Bay, Huntington North and the Enterprise reservoirs that have fill restrictions that will limit overall water supplies in those areas.

STREAMFLOW

Snowmelt streamflows are expected to have a wide range from much below average to near average across the state of Utah this year. Forecast streamflows range from 1% on North Creek near Monticello to 60% of average for Little Cottonwood Creek. Most flows are forecast to be in the 30% to 50% range.